



Bozeman Deaconess
CANCER CENTER

PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY

Annie Castillo, M.D.
Board Certified in
Internal Medicine
Medical Oncology

February 9, 2009

Exhibit No. 7

Date 3-13-2009

Bill No. HB 409

Dear Ms. Pomnichowski:

Jack Hensold, M.D.
Board Certified in
Internal Medicine
Medical Oncology
Hematology

We strongly support your efforts on behalf of *House Bill 409*, which will help create a cancer drug repository. These are exciting times for those of us who are engaged in the care of patients with cancer. An understanding of the causes of cancer has resulted in the availability of a new class of drugs that target the mechanisms responsible for cancer. Additional, new therapies target the interactions between cancer cells and the host. These therapies have increased cure rates and prolonged survival of patients who, as of yet, cannot be cured. In addition, new supportive therapies have significantly reduced the toxicities associated with standard chemotherapies and have substantially improved the quality of life, for nearly all cancer patients.


David Koeplin, M.D.
Board Certified in
Radiation Oncology


Rebecca Kane, N.P.
Nurse Practitioner

However, these advances have come at the large financial cost of drug development. New cancer therapies are, without exception, very expensive, ranging from \$3,000 - \$9,000 in monthly costs. Since nearly all the oral chemotherapies are subject to "co pays," all patients, independent of their insurance coverage, are placed at significant financial risk when diagnosed with cancer. For example, a Medicare patient will hit the "donut hole" in their coverage within the first month of treatment and will be liable for a \$5,000 payment for their drug.

For patients on fixed incomes, this creates a significant financial burden. Often patients have to make a decision about treating their disease or meeting daily needs. Patients sometimes decide they simply cannot afford the drugs that might save their life. Thus, despite advances in therapy, new difficulties have arisen in ensuring that all patients have access to the best available care. While *House Bill 409* does not address all the problems that currently plague health care delivery, it will help to ensure that patients have access to the best available therapies, regardless of their ability to pay. We greatly appreciate your efforts in this regard.

Sincerely,


Wendy Swinner, LSW
Annie Castillo
Rebecca Kane


David Koeplin, MD
Co-Mgr BS RT(RT)
Wendy Swinner, MBA
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